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Chair: Mr. Andambi (Vice-Chair) (Kenya)

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In the absence of Mr. Djani (Indonesia), Mr. Andambi (Kenya), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 19: Sustainable development (*continued*) (A/C.2/71/L.21)

Draft resolution on cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea (A/C.2/71/L.21)

1. **Ms. Murmokaitė** (Lithuania), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/71/L.21, said that it was sponsored by all member States of the European Union, which had been joined by Monaco and San Marino, and was a follow-up to General Assembly resolution 68/208. It reflected concerns about the potential long-term environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea, including their potential impact on human health and safety, as well as on the marine environment and resources. The draft resolution took into account the views of Member States and of relevant regional and international organizations reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (A/71/190).

Agenda item 59: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (A/71/86-E/20/2016/13)

2. **Ms. Khalaf** (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)), accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, introduced the report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/71/86-E/20/2016/13). Owing to processing requirements, the data in the report covered the period ending March 2016 and did not include more recent developments.

3. Israeli policies and practices continued to violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law, undermining the Palestinian people's right of self-determination. Their cumulative effects since 1967 had had a debilitating effect on the Palestinian people and had given rise to growing tension and eruptions of violence. In October 2015, violence had erupted in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in the aftermath of clashes at the Al-Aqsa mosque, with Palestinians perceiving that Israel was trying to change the status quo at holy sites and elsewhere, chipping away at the viability of a Palestinian State. Yet there continued to be a lack of accountability for Israeli settlers who committed acts of violence and attacked Palestinian property or religious sites.

4. Discriminatory planning and zoning practices in East Jerusalem, along with demolitions and forced displacements, had created a coercive environment that pressured Palestinians to leave the city, while those who remained faced increased poverty and neglect due to the severe lack of services. At the same time, incidents of excessive use of force against Palestinians were on the rise, with documented cases of what appeared to be extrajudicial killings and summary executions of individuals who posed no imminent danger. Since 1967, one in five Palestinians reported having been detained by the Israeli authorities, often in violation of international humanitarian law. Such violations included the excessive use of administrative detention of prisoners being held without charge or trial and forced feeding and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, as well as of medical negligence, including of children. Israel had passed a law in July 2015 allowing the forced feeding of prisoners on hunger strikes, a procedure that the Israeli Medical Association had characterized as equivalent to torture.

5. Israeli settlement policy lay at the heart of a multitude of discriminatory practices that included the deeply inequitable allocation of water and access to land, as well as a dual justice system in the West Bank, where home demolitions, land confiscation, forced evictions and the revocation of residency permits, inter alia, had created a continuing wave of displacements. Israel had resumed the practice of demolishing the homes of the families of suspected attackers, which was a clear violation of international humanitarian law. In more than 49 years of occupation, Israel had confiscated roughly 20 per cent of West Bank land. The wall in the West Bank, which had been ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice, remained the primary obstacle to the movement of Palestinians.

6. Meanwhile, in Gaza, 76,000 people remained homeless as a result of the 2014 Israeli attack and had been unable to rebuild because of the nine-year old blockade, which amounted to the collective punishment of 1.8 million Palestinians, with devastating effects on the population, infrastructure and economy. The result was a humanitarian disaster that had impeded projects by the United Nations and other organizations. Restricted access to agricultural land, limits imposed on fishing zones and the massive destruction of the water, wastewater and electrical infrastructure had compounded the hardships, damaging the agricultural sector and worsening the dire maritime, soil and air conditions.

7. Overall, those combined Israeli policies had left Palestinians with little access to their own water and land. By continuing to exploit Palestinian natural resources and pollute the environment, Israeli settlers and companies had stifled the economic activity of Palestinians, leading to an aid-dependent economy. Such an economy could not be put on a sustainable development path under the current paradigm. After almost 50 years of occupation, one in two Palestinians, or some 2.3 million people, would need some form of humanitarian assistance in 2016. The 26 per cent general unemployment rate and 40 per cent unemployment rate among youth provided an even grimmer outlook for the future.

8. Health and well-being had also been severely impacted by the occupation. Food insecurity was particularly acute in Gaza, where half of all families had insufficient food. Also in Gaza, due to the deterioration of health services and the effects of the 2014 destruction, both adults and children were suffering from the psychological effects of the occupation without adequate mental health support. For the first time in five years, infant mortality in Gaza was on the rise. Access to education for Palestinian children had also been compromised. In the West Bank, schoolchildren had been affected by the combined effects of the discriminatory allocation of resources, restrictions on mobility, and attacks and harassment by Israeli settlers and forces. The situation was particularly acute in Gaza, where the shortage of viable structures had forced 86 per cent of schools to operate on double shifts.

9. Turning to the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, annexed in 1981 in violation of international law, she said that while Syrian citizens faced continuing discrimination with regard to access to water and restrictions on their ability to build in their own villages, Israeli settlers continued to move into the area, receiving Government support and incentives and expanding the exploitation of its natural resources. There were active plans to bring in increasing numbers of settlers.

10. Apparently employing a three-tiered approach that relied on population displacement, land grab and suppression of all forms of resistance, Israeli policies and practices throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Syrian Golan continued to violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as well as such fundamental principles of international law as the inadmissibility of acquiring land by force, the principle of non-discrimination and the right of peoples to self-determination. Until and unless Israel put an end to its occupation and complied with the requirements of international law in all its elements, there could be no prospect of peace.

Question time

11. **Mr. Shawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that in a number of places, the report used terms that were not appropriate. In paragraphs 6, 16 and 19, it used the term "Israeli security forces" where it ought to have used the term "Israeli occupation forces". The phrase "violence by illegal armed Israeli settlers" was used in the introduction, when in reality, all the settlers were illegal, and all were perpetrating violence against the Palestinian people. Paragraph 17 spoke of Palestinians "killed while allegedly carrying out attacks against Israelis" without clarifying that the allegations in question had been made by biased Israeli investigators, and had in many cases been proven false. The phrase "procedural and legal steps" was used in paragraph 40 in reference to the relocations of some 50 Palestinian Bedouin communities in Area C without clarifying that the "legal" system under which those steps had been taken was the Israeli occupation regime. Paragraph 50 made reference to the July 2015 death of a toddler and his parents in an arson attack without noting that the Israeli Minister of Defence himself had acknowledged that the Israeli occupation forces knew who the

perpetrators were but were delaying their arrest and prosecution. Greater detail was needed in paragraph 82 on how Israel prevented Palestinians from developing their natural gas resources off the coast of Gaza, as well as mention of the four West Bank oil wells that Israel was using for its own benefit.

12. There were several subjects that the report had failed to touch on at all. Israel's practice of withholding customs revenues had done severe damage to the Palestinian economy. There was also a vast discrepancy between Israeli and Palestinian incomes, which meant that paying the same prices and taxes for basic commodities was inherently unfair. Repeated statements by Israeli officials ruling out the possibility of a two-State solution were having the effect of discouraging investment in Palestinian areas. The report also failed to mention the Palestinian journalists who had been driven to hunger strikes or the various ways that the occupation prevented Palestinians from deriving maximum benefit from tourism at Palestine's holy places, including forcing tour groups to stay overnight in Israel rather than in Palestinian territory. Recent racist laws passed by the Israeli parliament and the cantonization of the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem were also having a negative impact on the Palestinian economy. Palestinians faced major obstacles to trade with the outside world and had to take time-consuming and convoluted routes to travel to work. The report also failed to show how Israeli businesses were using the Israeli settlements to evade taxes. He hoped that all those topics would be covered in future reports.

13. **Ms. Khalaf** (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)) responding to the Observer for the State of Palestine, said that many of his remarks were accurate and would be taken into account in future reports, although the 8000-word limit did not allow every detail of Palestinian and Syrian suffering to be reflected.

14. Concerning the use of terms in the report, ESCWA would re-examine the report to see if its future reports could employ language that more closely reflected the reality of the occupation. With respect to the issue of settlers, the position of the United Nations was that all Israeli settlement in the occupied territories was illegal; therefore, the expression "illegal Israeli settlers" used in the report should not be understood to imply that the presence of any Israeli settlers in the occupied territories was legal. The report had used the term as it appeared in Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/17. Regarding the cumulative economic cost of the occupation, that issue lay outside the purview of the report. However, along with other United Nations agencies, ESCWA had begun to construct an analytical framework that would permit a more accurate assessment of such costs.

15. When a situation was plainly unbalanced, it had to be reported as such. The report reflected that one side, the occupying Power, dictated the reality on the ground. Not a single nation, outside Israel itself, had failed to recognize the illegality of its expanded settlements. Israel had violated the Charter of the United Nations, countless Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and many instruments of international law. General Assembly resolution 3246 (XXIX) had reaffirmed "the inalienable right of all peoples... to self-determination, freedom and independence", and had also reaffirmed "the legitimacy of the peoples' struggle for liberation from colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation by all available means, including armed struggle". In January 2016, the Secretary-General had said that it was human nature to react to occupation, which often served as a potent incubator of hatred and extremism. It would be useful to recall the parallel drawn by Archbishop Desmond Tutu between the systemic humiliation of Palestinian men, women and children by members of the Israeli security forces and the treatment of black South Africans at the hands of the security forces of the apartheid Government. "Those who turn a blind eye to injustice," Archbishop Tutu had said, "actually perpetuate injustice. If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor".

General discussion

16. **Mr. Shawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that at a recent Security Council meeting, the settler who served as the occupying Power's Permanent Representative to the United Nations had made the claim that United Nations reports on the Palestinian situation were biased against Israel. In reality, those reports covered only a fraction of Israel's crimes, partly because Israel denied international investigators access to Palestine, but also because Israel's network of diplomatic terrorists

employed the tried-and-true ruse of using allegations of anti-Semitism to silence criticism. Those diplomatic terrorists had even gone so far as to prevent the South African judge Richard Goldstone, a fellow Jew and author of the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, from attending his own grandson's bar mitzvah. More recently, they had been up in arms over decision 25.1B of the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) simply because it reaffirmed the established fact that the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Buraq Wall had no historical connection with the Jews. The Israeli Prime Minister himself had become involved in a deranged campaign against the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem after that organization's recent Arria Formula meeting with Security Council members about Israeli settlements.

17. Seven decades after the initial loss of 78 per cent of Palestinian territory, 700,000 Palestinian refugees had become 5 million. Five decades after the occupation of the remainder of Palestine, Israel was still in control of 61 per cent of the West Bank, which now contained some 600,000 settlers. Israel was continuing its 10-year siege of the Gaza Strip. It seemed pointless to issue reports that Israel did not even feel obliged to go to the trouble of reading. The Israeli settlements were a direct violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and a war crime, and the international community should take immediate steps under international law and recognized international resolutions to bring to justice the perpetrators of that crime and their accessories. His delegation renewed its call on Member States to boycott goods produced in the settlements, and to withhold citizenship, diplomatic credentials, business privileges and entry or transit visas from West Bank settlers.

18. **Ms. Paramanon** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the ESCWA report, while distressing, was useful in highlighting the persistent Israeli practices and policies that not only violated the rights of the people living under Israeli military occupation but also adversely affected their social and economic situation. The Group affirmed its unwavering and unequivocal support for the economic development efforts and aspirations of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and for the Syrian people in the occupied Syrian Golan.

19. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals included the pledge to leave no one behind. Yet the report under consideration revealed that the Palestinian people and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan would be left behind and would be unable to enjoy the fruits of sustainable development as long as they did not have sovereignty over their natural resources. Among the detrimental effects of the occupation were high unemployment rates, rampant poverty levels, widespread displacement and homelessness, extensive health problems, severe food insecurity, an insufficient number of schools and elevated school dropout rates, along with growing aid dependency for basic needs. In the environmental sphere, the effects included the he exploitation, endangerment and depletion of Palestinian natural resources, as well as obstacles to the implementation of critical environmental projects, such as a badly needed desalination facility and a sewage treatment plant in Gaza, necessary for addressing sanitation and health issues, including access to safe drinking water. Damaged electrical grids and shortages of fuel and electricity had created chronic power deficits.

20. It was clear from the report that the Palestinian economy and the occupied Syrian Golan could not be put on a sustainable development path under the current paradigm. The Group of 77 and China reiterated the call by the international community for an immediate end to systematic closures and restrictive measures. The Group reaffirmed its position that in the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and all major outcome documents, the severe difficulties faced by peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation must be taken into account, and the international community must strive to remove the obstacles to the full realization of their right of self-determination, which adversely affected their economic and social development and their ability to achieve and implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

21. **Mr. Malawane** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that Israeli practices and policies in the occupied Palestinian and Syrian territories were clearly obstructing Palestinian

economic and social development, and at times reversing it, undermining the right of the Palestinian people to development and self-determination. The situation begged the question of whether people living under foreign occupation had been adequately considered in the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land lay at the heart of discriminatory policies and widespread human rights violations, which undermined the prospects for peace and sustainable development. The severely lacking electricity and water services, deliberate destruction of homes, livelihoods and infrastructure, recurrent major military operations, confiscation of land, expansion of settlements, and prolonged restrictions on movement and trade constituted a unique humanitarian situation that was a direct result of 50 years of occupation. The Palestinian economy could not develop sustainably under such circumstances, and the mantra of "leaving no one behind" would ring true for Palestinians only when the Israeli occupation and its disruptive practices ended.

22. **Mr. Al-Kuwari** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, said that the ESCWA report attested to a systematic pattern of violations of human rights and international law by Israel, the occupying Power, and the resulting steep and alarming deterioration of the situation on the ground that had led to a human rights crisis among the Palestinian population. The continuation of the occupation was morally, legally and politically unacceptable. The assessment made in the report represented only a fraction of the violations that Israel, its military forces and settlers continued to perpetrate against the Palestinian people and their land, with total impunity, as the international community failed to hold Israel accountable under the law. At the same time, the socioeconomic, humanitarian and human devastation caused by the occupation had gravely affected the living conditions of the Palestinian people, severely undercutting any efforts towards sustainable development despite the assistance provided to the Palestinian people over many years by the international community, including United Nations agencies on the ground. Despite the calls by the international community to halt its illegal policies, and despite the fact that settlements posed the greatest obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution, Israel had not only continued, but had actually intensified, its illegal actions, including the construction of settlements and related infrastructure on occupied Palestinian land. The demolition of donor-funded humanitarian assistance structures had also spiked.

23. The occupying Power's continuing exploitation of natural resources, its obstruction of Palestinian movement by numerous measures, including the annexation, apartheid wall, permit regime and checkpoints, and the systematic collective punishment of the entire Palestinian civilian population indicated that it was more interested in consolidating control of Palestinian land than achieving peace and security. All those violations must cease and Israel must be compelled to respect international law. The Palestinian people could not remain an exception to the responsibility to protect civilians from atrocities and flagrant breaches of the law. The issue of accountability was just as urgent as addressing the humanitarian crisis, for without it Israel's impunity and depravity against the Palestinian people would be further emboldened.

24. In order to make tangible progress towards peace, security and prosperity, Israel must end its occupation and comply with international law, without exception. Failure to expedite that outcome would only increase the suffering of the Palestinians and lead to further destabilization, with far-reaching consequences, not least of which would be the impact on sustainable development in line with the 2030 Agenda. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation called for the continued support of all Member States, the United Nations, and its specialized agencies and programmes to assist the Palestinian people in their efforts to attain their rights and fulfil their legitimate national aspirations to live in justice and dignity in an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

25. **Mr. Louati** (Tunisia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the report presented factual coverage of the ongoing Israeli violations of human rights and international humanitarian law being perpetrated against the Palestinian people and the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan. Israel, the occupying Power, was engaging in discriminatory

policies and practices, including monopolization of water resources, and was killing and injuring civilians, including women, children and peaceful demonstrators. During the reporting period, 212 Palestinians, including 40 children, had been killed and over 16,000 people, including 6,000 children, had been injured.

26. Armed Israeli settlers were perpetrating violence and destroying property, while thousands of Palestinians had been arrested and had their homes destroyed. During the year 2015, some 544 buildings, including 79 in East Jerusalem, had been demolished, leaving more than 750 Palestinians homeless. Israel imposed restrictions on the movement of people and goods, in particular through its siege of Gaza and its continued construction of the West Bank wall. Israel also continued to deplete Palestinian natural resources and destroy infrastructure, inter alia by damaging utility grids that supplied thousands of Palestinians with water and electricity. Such practices undermined any hope of a two-State solution. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel planned to bring in 100,000 additional settlers, while continuing its discriminatory practices against Arab inhabitants there, including closing off vast areas to agriculture and herding, charging unfair prices for water and prospecting for natural resources.

27. The Group of Arab States called for stepped up efforts by Member States, the United Nations and international organizations to help the Palestinian people, and for protection of the rights of the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan. An immediate end to Israeli settlement was the necessary first step towards a peaceful, just and comprehensive resolution of the Middle East conflict that guaranteed the right of the Palestinian people to establish a sovereign, independent, viable and contiguous State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the territory occupied since 1967, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative. Ultimately, a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East could not be achieved without a full Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian and Arab territory, including the occupied Syrian Golan and the remaining occupied parts of southern Lebanon.

28. **Ms. Bajana Tinoco** (Nicaragua) said that it was not possible to speak of sustainable development and economic growth while a whole people was living under military occupation and unable to exercise control over its land, water and other natural resources and meet the basic needs of its citizens. The Palestinian people must be enabled to exercise their right to development and to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Her delegation was concerned by the continuing deterioration of the situation, which made it imperative to pressure countries whose passivity made them complicit in the suffering of the Palestinian people.

29. For there to be sustainable development in the occupied lands, the first step was to comply with existing resolutions that demanded an end to the occupation and respect for self-determination and sovereignty, which would enable refugees to return to the land that historically belonged to them. Her delegation hoped that the adoption of the draft resolution submitted by the Group of 77 and China under agenda item 59 would help mitigate the economic and social difficulties of the Palestinian and Syrian civilian populations living under foreign occupation and ultimately contribute to the international efforts to put an end to the injustice, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including humanitarian law, and human rights. Peace in the Middle East depended on resolving the question of Palestine and would require Israel to withdraw from Lebanon, the Syrian Golan Heights and all occupied Arab lands. It was also imperative to put an end to outside interference and intervention in the region in order to achieve peace and security in the Middle East for the benefit of the Arab and Israeli peoples.

30. **Mr. Axioma** (Indonesia) said that the Palestinian economy could not be placed on a path towards sustainable development given the planning policies, laws and practices of the occupying Power, which had consistently ignored numerous resolutions and calls by the international community to halt its illegal activities. The continuing expansion of illegal settlements was causing dire socioeconomic consequences, especially as a result of the confiscation of land and the forced diversion of water resources, the destruction of orchards and crops and the seizure of wells by Israeli settlers. The problem of economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was essentially political, not technical; for that reason, a political

solution was a prerequisite for the sustainable development of the Palestinian people.

31. His Government had hosted the 5th Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, held in Jakarta in March 2016, which had drawn the attention of the international community to the urgency of attaining a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. His Government provided technical assistance for the Palestinians at the bilateral and regional levels; under the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership, it had launched 128 programmes covering such areas as good governance, small and medium-sized businesses, agriculture, sports, diplomatic training, tourism, health, energy and women's empowerment. In 2016, it had conducted capacity-building programmes for Palestinians in cooperation with non-governmental organizations. Indonesia reaffirmed its solidarity with the Government and people of Palestine in their legitimate struggle to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and to their natural resources.

32. **Ms. Shurbaji** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Israeli occupation forces continued to impose their racist laws in the occupied Syrian Golan in violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981). They were offering incentives of up to $12,000 for Israeli families to settle there for a minimum period of five years, while preventing Syrians from engaging in agriculture — their primary source of livelihood — by closing off large swathes of land and blocking exports to the Syrian motherland. Israel was also continuing to dump toxic waste in the Golan, with disastrous health and environmental consequences. Meanwhile, the Israeli occupation was depriving Syrians of the use of their natural resources, and charging Syrians three times as much as settlers for water. The occupying Power had also expropriated Syrian land for wind farms and oil drilling, in collaboration with Western and United States companies.

33. During the current crisis in Syria, Israel had been providing logistical support and medical care to terrorists and mercenaries from the Nusrah Front and other terrorist groups. Recently, the Israeli Army had extended its influence to Wadi Yarmuk and Wadi Raqqad in the Dar'a countryside adjacent to the occupied Syrian Golan, and was helping armed terrorist groups to drive villagers from those areas.

34. Israel's inhumane and racist practices in occupied Palestinian and Syrian lands were blocking economic and social development. She called on the Committee to support the legitimate rights of Arab peoples under occupation by blocking any resolutions designed to whitewash Israel's image.

35. **Mr. Alotaibi** (Saudi Arabia) said that numerous reports had documented the Israeli occupation's flagrant violations of Palestinian rights, which included the racist separation wall, settlement construction, excessive use of force, home demolition, levelling of agricultural land, closures, and obstruction of access to healthcare, employment, markets, natural resources and humanitarian assistance. The siege of Gaza was having disastrous consequences for employment, productivity, living standards and food security, and was prolonging the financial crisis despite the Palestinian Authority's reforms.

36. Ever since Israel had occupied what was left of historical Palestine in 1967, his country had supported the right of Palestinians to an independent sovereign State with Jerusalem as its capital. The mosques, courtyards, walls and gates of the Haram al-Sharif were Arab Islamic Palestinian patrimony; to use biblical names for those sites was to acquiesce in the Israeli occupation's fraudulent retelling of history. He commended decision 25/1B of the Executive Board of UNESCO and stressed that, in Palestine, "status quo" meant the situation that had obtained under the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate. He condemned attempts by settlers to enter and defile the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and Palestinian churches.

37. Saudi Arabia had made the Palestinian issue one of its top priorities, and hoped for the eventual establishment of peaceful relations among all the States in the region on the basis of an Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territory occupied since 1967. Israel must cease its violations and comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including the General Assembly resolutions on the inalienable right of the Palestinians to their resources and their right to compensation for any resources depleted or put at risk by unlawful Israeli practices. He hoped that future reports from ESCWA would devote full coverage to the challenges faced by the Palestinian tourism industry and other obstacles

that prevented Palestinians from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

38. **Mr. Ramírez Carreño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country reiterated its condemnation of the occupation of Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan by Israel as a clear violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Moreover, the forced occupation of a territory did not confer any rights over its land or resources. Israel's discriminatory actions, along with its constant acts of military aggression against the Palestinian people and their infrastructure, directly affected sustainable socioeconomic development in the occupied territories. The report demonstrated the high socioeconomic costs of the Israeli occupation, along with the segregation and displacement of the Palestinian population, illegal settlements in Palestinian territory and restrictions on movement and the gravest factors impacting economic growth included Israel's illegal exploitation and degradation of Palestinian natural resources, including the contamination of aquifer reserves and arable land, the loss of flora and fauna, and hurdles that prevented Palestine from developing its natural gas reserves off the coast of Gaza.

39. Venezuela upheld the principle of the sovereign management of natural resources; the illegal exploitation of such resources by third parties, particularly colonial Powers, violated national sovereignty and contributed to poverty and despair among the population. Without the ability to control their own resources and thereby provide for basic needs, it was not possible for developing countries to begin to implement the 2030 Agenda. The Palestinians could not hope to attain the Sustainable Development Goals if they did not enjoy independence and freedom, and the occupying Power plundered natural resources, with no concern for the environmental consequences. The Gaza Strip, with its entire infrastructure in ruins, including schools, hospitals and dwellings, could not possibly implement the 2030 Agenda while under blockade. The occupation was the root and sole cause of the difficult economic situation of the Palestinian people. International efforts in support of Palestine were insufficient. His country reiterated its demand for stronger action in the General Assembly and, above all, in the Security Council, of which it was an elected member. The principal organs of the Organization could not remain idle with respect to so grave an issue.

40. **Ms. Huma** (Maldives) said that it had been reiterated countless times that there could be no development without peace, and no peace without development. Since there could be no development without the right to land and natural resources, agenda item 59 would continue to be a subject of discussion. The report made it clear that segregation and discrimination remained rampant in the allocation of water, access to land, freedom of movement and access to the legal system. Conditions were further deteriorating every day, due to destruction of homes, land confiscation, inadequate basic services and the ongoing blockade of Gaza.

41. Conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan could not be improved without adherence to the principles of the inadmissibility of acquiring land by force and non-discrimination, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Her delegation reiterated its steadfast support for the rights of the Palestinians, including the need for a two-State solution as a fundamental step towards safeguarding the human rights of the Palestinian people and their right of self-determination. Her delegation unequivocally condemned all practices and policies that violated international humanitarian law and international human rights law; the rule of law at the global level was the bedrock of international relations and the linchpin for sustaining peace and stability.

42. Through its occupation, policies and practices, Israel was undermining the right of the Palestinian people to development, self-determination and peace. The occupation would have lasting consequences; violence, discrimination and hate would never lead to peace, but only to more violence, hate and extremism. The 2030 Agenda could not be realized until the independence and sovereignty of all peoples under occupation was achieved, including the case of Palestine and the Syrian Golan.

43. **Mr. Hajimohammadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Palestinian people would never enjoy the benefits of sustainable development as long as they had no sovereignty over their natural resources. Their rights and dignity had long been trampled by the occupying Power: they had been forced to leave their

homes, deprived of their right to pursue social and economic prosperity in their own homeland and denied their inalienable right to self-determination. Israeli settlements continued to expand into the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which remained a captive market for exports from Israel. Socioeconomic conditions had worsened in Gaza and Israel continued to expropriate Palestinian agricultural land in the West Bank to build housing and infrastructure for exclusive use by settlers. Israeli settlement policies violated international law and all the relevant Security Council resolutions. The collective punishment imposed by Israel constituted grave breaches of international humanitarian law, crimes against humanity, and serious threats to international peace, security and stability. The existence and expansion of the illegal settlements lay at the heart of the apartheid Israeli policies and human rights violations, which included home demolitions, discriminatory allocation of water and access to land and restrictions on movement.

44. His delegation urged the United Nations system to strengthen its programmes of assistance to mitigate the suffering of the Palestinians and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan through the provision of adequate resources and effective operational activities. Any solution to the crisis in Palestine, including ways and means to achieve sustainable development and economic growth in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, required an immediate termination of the occupation and the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, establishment of their independent and viable State, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital, and full sovereignty over their natural resources.

45. **Mr. Castro Cordoba** (Costa Rica) said that his delegation firmly believed that there could be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development; yet the Palestinian people continued to be subjected to discrimination and deprivations that impeded their legitimate aspirations for development. The political situation, and more specifically the internal security situation in the Palestinian territories, was very complex. His delegation reiterated its call for the parties to reactivate and strengthen the mechanisms for dialogue and work together in a transparent manner for the benefit of their respective populations. On the road to sustainable development, both parties had responsibilities, although those responsibilities were differentiated. Negotiations must resume on the core issues of the conflict on the basis of the obligations already incurred and agreements previously reached, backed by international law and the international community.

46. A year after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Committee must ensure support for sustainable development in Palestine. In that context, it was important to guarantee access to basic health services and quality education, women's empowerment, and access to water, sanitation, and sustainable energy. With a view to building peaceful and inclusive societies, it was also vital to make respect for all human rights, including the right to development, a reality for Palestine. Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority must focus on a single central goal: to guarantee the sustainable development of the Palestinian people so that no one was left behind.

47. **Mr. Raja Zaib Shah** (Malaysia) said that the ESCWA report confirmed that the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan was worsening. His delegation had been at the forefront in the Security Council in highlighting Israel's illegal settlement expansion, which continued unabated despite overwhelming criticism by the international community. Israel's repressive policies of constructing a wall inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory, exploiting Palestinian natural resources, demolishing homes, revoking residency rights, conducting military operations and severely restricting the movement of people and goods were all in violation of Palestinian rights. Its ruthless treachery against the Palestinian people, including home demolitions and discriminatory allocation of water and access to land, had a particularly harsh physical and psychological impact on children as they moved into adulthood knowing only occupation, repression and violence, and boded ill for the prospects of peace in the Middle East.

48. His delegation urged the United Nations system to strengthen its assistance to the Palestinians and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan, and called on the international community to provide adequate and reliable funding to the relevant agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), as well as financial resources to facilitate their work in reducing

the hardships caused by the infringement of the sovereignty of the Palestinians and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources. It also condemned the recent deportation of the women activists aboard the Freedom Flotilla *Zaytouna-Oliva*, aimed at breaking the naval blockade of the Gaza Strip. His delegation supported the call by the Palestinian leadership to make 2017 the year that the Israeli occupation ended and the historical injustice suffered by the Palestinian people for half a century was corrected.

49. **Mr. Slaiman** (Iraq) said that the ESCWA report showed how the Israeli occupation violated international humanitarian and human rights law, and affected economic and social conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. The separation wall, the siege of Gaza and other restrictions on Palestinian movement were denying Palestinians the full use of their natural resources. Israel's settlement policy and its attempts to alter the demographic composition of Jerusalem were in flagrant defiance of some dozen Security Council resolutions. Such behaviour undermined any peace initiatives.

50. The Palestinian people had the right to the use of their land, water and natural resources, and were entitled to compensation for any of those resources that were exploited or depleted as a result of the occupation's unlawful measures. The 2030 Agenda's pledge to leave no one behind would be hard to implement in Palestine as long as Israel continued to act with impunity. He called on Member States to support the draft resolution on the current agenda item, and expressed support for the Palestinian President's proposal to declare 2017 the year to end the Israeli occupation.

51. **Mr. Al Hemrani** (United Arab Emirates) said that despite the numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions demanding that Israel halt the construction of illegal settlements in Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, Israel had not responded and had further expanded those activities, thus fragmenting the West Bank and restricting the Palestinians from accessing their natural resources. The Arab population of the Syrian Golan, which was still illegally occupied by Israel, similarly suffered from discrimination, restriction of movement, and denial of access to resources necessary for their work and livelihood. The construction of the separation wall had resulted in confiscation of land, destruction of water resources, and the disintegration of Palestinian society. Widespread poverty, unemployment and lack of food and water security had deprived the Palestinian people of their right to sustainable development. The international community must commit to ensuring sustainable development through the removal of obstacles that limited people's capacities to achieve it.

52. His delegation supported the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to their natural resources and the establishment of their independent State on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with all relevant international resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. It also stressed the Arab identity of the Syrian Golan and the right of the Syrian people to recover the occupied Golan. International efforts must be intensified to achieve a comprehensive and lasting solution to the situation in the Middle East, in which the end of the Israeli occupation of all occupied Arab territories, including the Golan Heights, was guaranteed. His delegation applauded the efforts of United Nations entities to help the Palestinian people and supported their right to become a full State Member of the United Nations. The United Arab Emirates urged the international community, financial institutions and donors to provide assistance to UNRWA so that it could ensure that the Palestinian people had the capacity to implement the 2030 Agenda and rebuild their institutions pending a comprehensive and fair resolution of the Middle East issue. In that regard, his country was making a voluntary annual contribution of $1.8 million to the core budget of UNRWA, as well as other contributions amounting to 15 million dirhams.

53. **Ms. Aljazi** (Jordan) said that the Israeli occupation had been obstructing Palestinian economic and social progress for almost half a century. Israeli settlements, the racist separation wall, revocation of residency rights in East Jerusalem, expropriation of land and resources, closures and mobility restrictions were all continuing to deprive the Palestinian people of their right to development. The siege of Gaza was now entering its tenth year. As the financial crisis continued, Palestinians were seeing a slowdown in economic growth, increased unemployment and

poverty, food shortages, a shrinking agricultural sector, declining incomes and rising inflation. Various reports had detailed the effects on Palestinian agriculture of land confiscations, land destruction, deforestation and settler bypass roads. Even water was being distributed in a discriminatory manner. In Gaza, Israel was barring Palestinians' access to 50 per cent of their agricultural land and 85 per cent of their fish resources. Losses from the three wars since 2008 had been estimated at three times the gross domestic product (GDP).

54. Israel's occupation was a violation not only of international law but also of the Palestinian people's right to development. She urged member States to pressure Israel to enable the Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination and establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. In the meantime, the international community should continue to provide the necessary assistance for Palestinians to meet their basic needs.

55. **Mr. Annakou** (Libya) said that Israel was continuing to construct the separation wall that had been ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004. During 2015, the occupation authorities had done extensive damage to water infrastructure on the West Bank by destroying wells, reservoirs and water tanks, and had ruined thousands of acres of land by torching, spraying chemicals or dumping waste. Home demolition continued at an alarming rate in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, while settlements continued to expand. The effects of displacement were particularly acute in Gaza, where many people were cut off from the water and sanitation grids, and recovery from the 2014 military offensive continued to be impeded by the ongoing siege. In the occupied Syrian Golan, settlement construction also continued, and inhabitants were denied access to water and agricultural land.

56. Given the centrality of the Sustainable Development Goals to the Committee's agenda, delegations needed to consider what effect all those Israeli measures were having on Palestinians' prospects for development. Poverty eradication and food security were all but unattainable when people were deprived of their livelihoods and natural resources. Gender equality was beyond the reach of the vast majority of qualified Palestinian women who were out of work. A society where no one was marginalized could not be achieved under conditions of discrimination, apartheid and siege. The Israeli occupation's practices were a violation of numerous international instruments, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. He reaffirmed his country's support for the right of the Palestinian people to an independent State in all of its territory with Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of all refugees to return to their homeland, and he urged the international community to act to end the siege of Gaza and protect the rights of Palestinians under international law.

57. **Ms. Scott** (Namibia) said that her delegation was deeply concerned by the reported accelerated construction of Israeli settlements and the apartheid wall, the exploitation of Palestinian natural resources, the increased demolitions of homes, economic institutions, and agricultural infrastructure. The severe restrictions on movement imposed by Israel through the blockade of Gaza amounted to collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Her Government called on the Israeli Government to desist immediately from settlement and wall construction, cease its destruction of Palestinian homes and properties, and comply with the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel must also cease the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan; loss and reduction of land, water and other natural resources were some of the main factors that prevented the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory from thriving.

58. Namibia supported the international consensus that the illegal Israeli occupation must end. Statehood and independence were the national, legal and inalienable rights of all people, including Palestinians;. It was unacceptable that the Palestinian economy was so heavily reliant on international assistance because too many barriers had been put in the way of normal economic activities. The argument that Palestine was ineligible for statehood because of poor economic health was invalid, as that had never been considered a criterion upon which statehood was recognized, or a factor considered when a country applied for membership in the United Nations. Palestine was already recognized as a State by 132 countries, and it

was high time for the Palestinian people's right of self-determination to be internationally recognized. It was disheartening that an occupying Power could so blatantly seek to consolidate its illegal occupation and attempt to make it irreversible, while simultaneously enjoying sympathy, recognition and assistance from some quarters.

59. Namibia called on the international community to continue its efforts to ensure respect for obligations under international law, in order to secure an end to all illegal Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly the settlements programme. Her Government strongly believed that the only avenue available for economic and social development in the occupied territories in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was formal international recognition of the State of Palestine.

60. **Mr. Gad** (Egypt) said that under Israeli occupation, the inhabitants of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan lived in a world that could not be further removed from the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda and other international instruments such as the New Urban Agenda just adopted by the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III). Israeli settlement expansion was a flagrant violation of international law. Home demolition, land confiscation and restrictions on Arab construction in the West Bank had impoverished inhabitants to the point that one of every two Palestinians were in need of some kind of humanitarian assistance and 75 per cent of the population of East Jerusalem lived below the poverty line. With Palestinian movement restricted by such arbitrary Israeli measures as the construction of the separation wall, it was no surprise that the Palestinian economy was estimated to be operating at only half of its potential.

61. Particularly troubling in the light of Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals on clean water and sanitation was Israeli monopolization of water resources in the West Bank, where settlers were allocated many times more water per capita than Palestinians. In the occupied Syrian Golan as well, Syrian farmers were denied access to water while Israeli settlements were well supplied. The situation described in the report was not sustainable. The 2030 Agenda's promise of leaving no one behind could only be fulfilled in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan by bringing an end to the Israeli occupation.

62. **Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh) said that the continuing occupation of the Palestinian territories, systematic human rights violations, indiscriminate attacks against civilians and expansion of illegal settlements by Israel, the occupying Power constituted an affront to the rights of the Palestinian people. The devastation wrought by nearly five decades of occupation had gravely affected living conditions. The humanitarian and socioeconomic situation was dire, especially under the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, which was now entering its tenth year. The destruction of homes and property and the exploitation and depletion of Palestinian natural resources had compounded the difficulties. The occupation and blockade caused shortages of water, fuel and electricity, and were obstacles to the implementation of critical environmental projects, such as water desalination and sewage treatment facilities, to the detriment of public sanitation and the health and well-being of the population. Those issues must be urgently addressed.

63. The Sustainable Development Goals were universally applicable, regardless of political status. However, the Palestinian and Syrian people would not enjoy the benefits of sustainable development until they had sovereignty over their natural resources. His delegation called on the international community to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to end its systematic violation of international humanitarian law and human rights so that the economies of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, could grow. The absence of the right to self-determination of the people living in those territories posed a significant challenge to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

64. **Mr. Al Shuaibi** (Oman) said that as the report showed, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israel was continuing to construct settlements, extend the separation wall, exploit Palestinian natural resources, demolish homes, revoke East Jerusalem residency rights, conduct military operations, close off areas and

impose restrictions on the movement of people and goods, including the siege of Gaza. Israel's policies constituted a violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In the occupied Syrian Golan as well, Israel imposed excessive force and mobility restrictions while expanding settlements and monopolizing natural resources. He called on the international community to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, to desist from its illegal practices and to lift restrictions on the ability of the Palestinian people and the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan to improve their economic and social conditions so that they could live a life of dignity.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.